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**TO:** Fauquier County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Frederick P.D. Carr, Director

**SUBJECT:** Introduction of the Engineers & Surveyors Institute to the Fauquier County Development Process

**DATE:** May 6, 2003

**cc:** Christer Carshult, County Engineer  
Kimberley Johnson, Chief of Zoning, Permitting & Inspections

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- A. *Engineers & Surveyors Institute (ESI)*. ESI is a nonprofit Virginia corporation formed in December of 1987, and its primary function was to promote a public/private partnership devoted to improving the quality of engineering plans and the process by which they are approved. The Institute also provides programs to improve the design and approval process, maintain current practice education for both public and private professionals, and to improve communication through the land development industry.

ESI membership includes engineering and surveying firms practicing in land development in Virginia, local jurisdictions, VDOT, public utility agencies, and other similar organizations (Refer to Attachment A). The organization was formed due to the frustration experienced on the part of local government and professionals firms as a result from confusing regulations and their application and the declining quality of plans filed. Now there is an established track record in several ESI programs, which member communities use, that could assist Fauquier County.

The Department of Community Development is proposing to introduce Engineers & Surveyors Institute (ESI) into the review process for the two referenced plan categories. With increased application volume in the complex construction and site plan categories, County staff and referral agencies are being handcuffed by mandatory action timelines and a declining quality in plan submittals.

The Department's primary objectives are two-fold. First, we simply need to see better plan submissions meeting checklist requirements, and second, we are actively seeking to improve our plan review process and the clarity of our regulations. ***Improved plan quality enables the County, Health, VDOT and WSA staffs to comprehensively review and comment on filed***

*applications, rather than commenting initially on fatal flaws.* All agencies are operating with staffing constraints and need not to serve as a quality control review for submitting firms that need to fulfill that responsibility. On the other hand, the County needs to provide a predictable development review process with clear submission requirements, comprehensive and consistent referral review and comments pursuant to development regulation requirements.

B. *Proposed Program Summary.* For construction plans and site plans, there are several advantages to establishing the ESI program tailored to Fauquier County. It can:

1. Be self-funding through the applicant;
2. Provide a review time incentive to those professional firms completing high quality work in conformance with County land development regulations and standards;
3. Present process predictability;
4. Provide a disincentive to those not providing quality work (additional submissions, fee penalties, longer review times, and ESI membership issues);
5. Reduction of the natural adversary relationship between the public and private sector;
6. Supply an additional source of expertise and assistance to County staff; and
7. Improve the focus of limited staff resources on major design concerns and comprehensive review, rather than taking time on trivial mistakes.

*Peer Review-Quality Control (3-Step Phase).*

1. Step 1 (Fatal Flaw Checklist Review): This review is mandatory for any ESI member firm. An applicant can request this review process with a non-member firm, but would need to pay the established fee.
  - The Peer Review (ESI Engineer and ESI-Private Firm Engineer) provides fatal review each construction plan or site plan for checklist compliance. Those that fail are rejected with the stated checklist reasons.
  - The Peer Review Team [ESI, and County staff member(s)] and the submitter of the plan meet to review application (Approved Proffer/Special Exception Conditions; VDOT requirements; Questioned Checklist Items. The application is either accepted for processing, or rejected and returned to the applicant with the stated checklist and regulation reasons.
2. Step 2 (Technical Review Committee): Here the County and referral agencies agree to complete the comprehensive technical review and recommendations regarding the application for the next Technical Review Committee (TRC), which meets monthly with the applicant and the firm completing the plans, includes applicable County staff, the Health department and VDOT. Their review is now focused on key design issues, rather than questionable application work quality or simply incomplete submissions. The objective here is that the TRC provides final recommended refinements, agreed upon with the applicant.
3. Step 3 (Final Action): The revisions are filed for Peer Review Team evaluation. If the revisions meet the TRC recommendations, those revisions are accepted for final detailed review. At the conclusion of that review, any refinements are identified, signature plan sets are requested for approval with any house-keeping corrections included. Peer Team

rejection, of any re-submission will state the technical reasons (e.g., did not complete or include specified key improvements or corrections as outlined through the TRC; based on County and state regulations) and the subsequent re-submission will require a filing fee penalty.

*Planned Results.*

Fairfax County and other jurisdictions require the ESI process as mandatory for a wide number of plan categories. Even though Fairfax County has significant staffing resources, it takes up to 355 days to reach construction plan/final plat or site plan approval to reach the bond certification stage, due to a variety of review agencies, process requirements, and sheer volume. *Nevertheless, the process has resulted in firms moving through the approval process in 75% of the time experienced by others, due to overall plan quality and fewer resubmissions.*

In the Fauquier County TRC process, construction plan/final plat review stages and approval currently requires between 150 and 180 days, while site plan approval averages between 100 and 130 days. That timeline includes the resubmissions, coordination and required referral agency reviews.

Once implemented, the ESI process is expected to improve submission quality, improve review/comment predictability, and result in fewer resubmissions. As a result, approvals for construction plan/final plat are expected to be within 100-130 days, while site plan approvals could be in the 80-110 day timeframes. These timelines include checklist review, written staff technical analysis and recommendations, TRC meeting review, final review of resubmitted plans, and final signature set approval.

*Board of Supervisors Recommended Action:*

Direct staff to present the recommended fee structure to support this program at the June meeting. The ESI program will be limited to only the construction plan/final plat and site plan categories.

## ATTACHMENT A

## Engineer &amp; Surveyor Institute Members

**Firms**

A. Morton Thomas and Associates, Inc.	John P. DiGiulian
Adtek Engineers, Inc.	KJ & Associates
Alexandria Surveys International LLC	Kpff Consulting Engineers
Alpha Corporation	Land Development Consultants, Inc.
ATCS, P.L.C.	Loudoun County Sanitation Authority
Basham & Mullen P.C.	Paciulli, Simmons & Associates, Ltd.
BC Consultants, Inc., The	Patton, Harris, Rust & Associates, P.C.
Bohler Engineering, P.C.	PBS&J
Bowers & Associates, Ltd.	Plan Source, The
Bowman Consulting Group, Ltd.	Prince William County Service Authority
Burgess & Niple, Inc.	R. C. Fields, Jr. & Associates, P.C.
Bury+Partners	Rickmond Engineering Inc.
Carson, Harris & Associates, Inc.	Rinker-Detwiler & Associates, P.C.
Charles P. Johnson & Associates, Inc.	Ross, France & Ratliff, Ltd.
christopher consultants, ltd.	Runyon, Dudley Associates, Inc.
Delashmutt Associates, Ltd.	SAAD Consultants, P.C.
Design Management Group	Suburban Development Engineering Inc.
Design/Build concepts, Ltd.	Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
Dewberry & Davis LLC	The Tech Group, Inc.
Eastern States Engineering	T. Y. Lin International
Engineering Group, The	Tri-Tek Engineering
Fairfax County Water Authority	Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority
Fairfax County Public Schools	Urban Engineering & Associates, Inc.
Frederick Ward Associates	VIKA, Inc.
GDN Engineering, Inc.	Vitech Engineering
GHJ Limited	Virginia-American Water Company

GJB Engineering, Inc.

Walter L. Phillips, Inc.

Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.

Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.

Harold A. Logan Associates, P.C.

Wiles Mensch Corporation

HNTB Corporation

William H. Gordon Associates, Inc.

Huntley, Nyce, & Associates, Ltd.

Zicht Engineering, Ltd.

J. William Ewing, P.E.

**Jurisdictional Members**

City of Alexandria - DOT&ES

Town of Herndon - DPW

Arlington County - DPW

Town of Leesburg

Fairfax County – DPE&ES

Town of Purcellville

City of Falls Church - DPW

VDOT

Loudoun County – DP&D

**Sustaining Members**

[Air Survey Corporation](#)

[The Drees Company](#)

[Americast](#)

[Rotondo/Oldcastle Precast](#)

[Bridgetek](#)

*ESI by-laws limit membership to land development consulting firms, professional geo-technical and environmental consulting firms associated with the land development process, public agencies and quasi-public agencies, and individuals that prepare or review plans for residential, commercial and industrial builders/developers in Virginia and Maryland.*